

It's Not in Me, But God

Genesis 41

Having been sold into slavery 13 years previously, Joseph finds himself before Pharaoh, the most powerful man in the Ancient Near East.

God moves in the souls of non-believers (v. 8).

Pharaoh is shaken to the core by some vivid dreams. No matter how powerful the person, they are not beyond God's reach. This reminds us that God is the agent of heart change. God's revelation to Pharaoh is actually an act of grace, but Pharaoh misses it.

He calls for the guild of magicians and diviners, but they cannot satisfy what he most wants.

This raises the question of adequacy in our faith. This must be distinguished from practicality. What we mean by adequacy is whether the claims of a faith satisfy the longings of the soul.

Joseph gives God the credit (vv. 15-16, 32, 50-52).

Astoundingly, right when Pharaoh wants to recognize Joseph as the only person who can help, Joseph says that only God can help. How many of us would be prepared to take credit?

By giving his sons Hebrew names, Joseph credits God with a.) allowing him to forget his pain and b.) making him fruitful in tough circumstances. In this sense, he remembers how God has delivered him.

Joseph's faith is strong, though he is outnumbered.

Joseph is surrounded by Egyptian culture and religion. He is made to look and dress more like an Egyptian (vv. 14, 43). He receives an Egyptian name and takes an Egyptian wife, the daughter of a pagan priest (v. 45, Cf. Daniel 1).

He teaches us how to be faithful as "a remnant," or those in exile.

Joseph displays the wonderful combination of humility, competence, and hard work.

Humility – Joseph’s life points to God, despite all he had.

Competence – He proves himself “discerning and wise” (v. 33). These categories point not only to correct content or intellectual knowledge, but also good judgment.

Hard Work – Storing this amount of food is a tremendous effort. We get the impression that Joseph completed the task with all diligence, having traveled widely (vv. 46–49).

We learn here that God’s revealed Word entails a degree of planning and strategy.

Key Take-Away: We want to use the gifts God has given us to His greater glory.

Application Questions:

How can I give God more credit for any accomplishments?

What do we notice about Joseph’s faithfulness to the God of the Bible in a non-believing land?

What is the relationship between God’s gracious gifting and practical living?

How does Joseph’s life show us the important principle that faithfulness over small things can lead to responsibility over greater things?